



MULTI ~~TOP SECRET~~ FUNCTION POLIS



For many years now, the Federal government has been telling us that the most important problem that Australia faces is that "the economy" is sick. And that they have the solutions, such as new defence contracts, tax reform, economic de-regulation, export drives and... build a Multi Function Polis.

What is the purpose of the Multi Function Polis?

Reports say it is meant to be a high tech educational research centre, facilitating technology transfer from Japan, and an infusion of Japanese industrial management know-how. It is meant to transform Australia's economy into burgeoning "sunrise industries", boost exports and clear foreign debt.

The Multi Function Polis idea originated in Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) leisure division and looks very much an up-graded, less segregated, Australian version of the Japanese "technopolis" concept. This was to be a network of regional "mother-cities" of 100-200,000 people that were planned as "focal points for advanced research in sunrise industries", dispersing industrial growth from the Tokyo-Osaka corridor to new regions; using "jobs" to get development approvals & votes for the party in power.

"A city with human dimensions... a semi-residential city for international, academic and interdisciplinary exchange providing, gathering, and reproducing information... between people from different regions, staying from several weeks to years, with a large number of permanent residents, featuring both high-tech and 'high-touch' (tourist, entertainment, resort and convention) industry" is how the original 1987 MITI Concept Report on the Multi Function Polis speaks of it.

The 'High-tech' is taken to emphasize bio-technology, materials science, and computer software, which both MITI and Australia's equivalent DITAC, have elsewhere nominated as key technologies for the next century - in all of which, Australia has considerable advantages over Japan, especially in basic research and creativity, although we are weak in product development and commercialization.

Although hazy on details, MITI's paper placed the emphasis distinctly on social infrastructure (health services, communication and transport, education) and "quality of life". Discussion of high-tech industry dealt primarily with basic research - Japan's weak link. There is little detailed discussion of industrial development, beyond acknowledging the Australian Government's interest. Unquestioned assumptions, priorities and corporate domination which is built into the MFP and similar projects worry the critics.

They see a web, with collective implications far beyond those apparent in any one project in isolation, and linking the VFT, MFP, and the Cape York Space Station.

There are two main concerns. Firstly that the proposed MFP could dangerously direct future Australian research and technology, society, and labour conditions dominantly to international corporate profit. Secondly

that increasingly PR-managed information makes Australians captive to the powerful self-interest of bureaucrats, politicians and corporations; turning democracy into autocracy.

As Yoshio Sugimoto, Professor of Sociology at La Trobe University, has said, it is disturbing that the MFP Joint Steering Committee observed that "it is necessary to control the consciousness of public and related organizations very carefully"... and it is also disquieting that the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce (DITAC) placed an embargo on a Social Impact Study's publication for over a year because it contained points which did not agree with the view of Canberra bureaucracy and MFP's commercial participants.

Initiated by Japan's MITI, the MFP is funded by a selected "membership" consortium of major Australian and Japanese corporations, under a joint Australian-Japanese Government umbrella. The MFP's goals, structure, or implications have surfaced only in PR-managed "seminars" and kite-flying PR news releases, obviously testing public reaction, teasing up enthusiasm, and enlisting support by targeting the self-interest of defined groups, including the Australian State Governments.

Many critics are highly skeptical about likely technology transfer from Japan to Australia. Quoting Professor McCormack "While the Australian side is clearly attracted by the prospect of introducing Japanese 'high-tech' industry



MFP - HIDDEN AGENDAS?

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There seems to be something fishy about the MFP. It was reported in the Sydney papers last January that Federal Cabinet had endorsed a "Big Brother" style information campaign to head off public concern about the proposed Multi-Function Polis. Under the new plan, special groups in the community were targeted for "positive" messages about the project.

The deeper one digs into the MFP, the more one becomes aware that it is part of a much larger 'plan'. The list of Governments, and multi-nationals alone suggests that this decision has already been made, and as usual we're the last to know about it.

The MFPs sited in Australia are designed to eventually "hook-up" to other such MFPs world-wide. This is an interesting and possibly obvious development, but consider the implications - a global network of millions of "selected" and "controlled" people living in high security cities, complete with state of the art sensing devices, and in short - a high tech "big brother" if in the wrong hands.

If you look at the fine print, the MITI plan includes a centralised "security" force, a centralised health system to keep an eye on your lifestyle, centralised supervision of electricity use and even centralised accounting. Confidential documents of MFP Aust. Research Ltd involve plans for the manufacture of biological implants for human mood control, and the development of Australia as a nuclear waste dump. (MFP Aust Research Ltd is a private company and is exempt from Freedom of Information requests from the public)

Consider this extract from "Hard Facts for Hard Times" #17 - Nov 1988 by Joan Coxsedge MP (VIC).

"Our government already has the "right" man to lead the project - Alan Wrigley, recently retired Director General of ASIO. He is doubly qualified, having previously been in charge of Government Aircraft Factories, (which is almost exclusively engaged in military contracts, often under conditions of extreme secrecy.

It is highly unlikely that a person with these particular qualifications would be chosen if the projects were of a civilian nature. And then we have Ross Garnaut, Chairman of Aluminium Smelters Victoria, and a member of the steering committee of the MFP Project.

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to Australia, Japanese companies in that sector are known to be most dubious about the project". Professor Sugimoto points out that even in Japan, critical expertise is retained in Tokyo.

Other critics suggest it is more likely that creative science would flow the other way, and Australians will end up with "the service jobs" as in the tourist industry (where Japan exports profits by owning the construction, transport, hotels, and destination attractions)!

These are immense engineering projects, significantly shaping extensive urban developments in Australia's most valuable landscapes.

Significantly, of the 115 members of Japan's "Working Groups" on MFP, 68 are concerned with urban infrastructure and international resort development, including Kumagai Gumi, which is also building the Sydney Harbour tunnel.

Japanese construction corporations like Kumagai Gumi have a pattern of initiating and developing "packages" to be "sold" to Governments in joint ventures with local companies, avoiding tendering processes by "owning the idea".

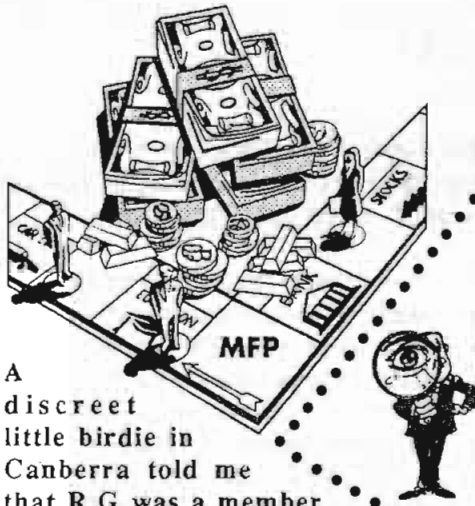
Mainland States are bidding competitively to attract it - without an analysis of whether regions can sustain such concentrated leaps in population, and without any consultation with people already living in the near city fringe areas on which the MFP might be imposed. This lays the groundwork for later extensions of more "MFP's"; a sanctified

property development bonanza, potentially overriding existing regulations and any other considerations.

A joint Government venture, like MFP, would greatly strengthen Japanese influence over access to Australian resources and opportunities, and facilitate offshore corporatization, directly or through further joint ventures. It must inevitably stimulate the increasing trend towards foreign ownership, from property to patents.

However "internationalized" the Multi Function Polis becomes, the financial and other strengths of the Japanese corporations will ensure their increasing control of the MFP, directing the outcomes to what most benefits Japan as the hub of the emerging Pacific Rim economic web.

What is the Multi Function Polis meant to be? A "Renaissance City" of the Space Age, integrated into Australian society as a whole? A "Technopolis" concentrating on existing Australian expertise in science and technology Japan would value? Or is it meant to be a kind of "Silicon Valley", teaching Australian businessmen how the Japanese make ideas saleable, and sell them? A lovely place to visit, or live in, with or without visa, built where nothing is now? Near an existing city? In a pleasant climate with plenty of recreational opportunities... beaches and golf courses? A super University town... corporate cloisters, and a Management Board of shareholder corporations? **N**



A discreet little birdie in Canberra told me that R.G. was a member of ASIO. SO HERE WE HAVE TWO "EX" ASIO SNOOPS, THAT WE KNOW ABOUT, INVOLVED IN THIS VENTURE.

The last curious piece of information relating to this is that the push for MFPs appears to stem from the Japanese Government and MITI, whilst the Japanese corporate sector are only "luke warm" on the project. It would appear that the MFP is not a financially viable project! *I thought this was the "reason" for the MFP in the first place!* **N**

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THE FEASIBILITY GAME...

The Anderson-Kinbill "Feasibility Study" for the MFP, reportedly costing \$1.25 million of the approximate \$5 million spent so far, was released at the end of 1989. It proposed a single city of about 100,000 people was the most "commercially viable" (rather than geographically scattered "hub and spoke" MFP centres that had been discussed earlier). The report, coupled to previous publicity of a possible Disneyland city, spurred public anxiety about a "Japanese enclave..."

In March 1990, DITAC and the Federal Government 'rejected' the Kinhill Report, admitted that lack of public discussion and the vague nature of proposals had created "an unfortunate environment" and announced there would be "full public discussion" before the project proceeded. There were reports that the Japanese were upset by public response and might pull out of the MFP, reducing investment into Australia into the bargain. A public meeting in Melbourne organised by the Rainbow Alliance attracted 1000 people - a measure of public concern. A *Couchman* program on ABC, cut to half an hour because the MFP Corporation originally refused to participate, also demonstrated public concern (the author was advised in June by DITAC that the the Government now favoured a "hub and spokes" development of several MFPs; that the Kinhill report had "lead them down a garden path" and wasted an enormous effort; and that the Government would not enter commitments with Japan until after a process of public discussion extending to the end of 1990, probably with a "Commission" going around the States to take submissions).

However, State Governments were required to submit specific proposals for the MFP in May 1990 for the Australian MFP Steering Committee to select a site, which it would recommend to the Joint Japanese Australian Committee by mid July. The Australian MFP Committee selected Queensland's Gold Coast proposal subject to the Qld Government securing all the land within a week; when Queensland rejected that, with much public protest by local landholders, the MFP Committee announced Adelaide as the selected site. The Qld Gov't announced it would go ahead with its own form of MFP anyway, although possibly not in the site it had proposed.

The Adelaide proposal entails building a series of villages at Gilman, near Port Adelaide, on 3500 hectares of heavily polluted land bordered by mangrove reserves and other environmentally sensitive features. It envisages a "World University" centre at Gilman, as part of a network co-ordinating existing Universities, colleges, and research centres... making "all Adelaide" an "MFP".

Those technologies are proposed to focus on computer software, communications (a computer mail and database system is proposed to grid the Adelaide education centres, and connect world wide), marketable environmental fixes and environmental management training.

The Adelaide proposals are more specific,

and more practical, than the Kinhill and other reports. The fundamental assumptions and priorities driving the project - the proposal for a corporate-owned city under "charter", governed by a hierarchy of appointed committees including corporate and foreign-Government representatives and the site itself - are all issues for challenge, but there are many interesting ideas in the Adelaide proposal. The most interesting by-products of all this are the emerging challenge to the assumptions and processes underlying the MFP and a range of papers that are definitely NOT part of the official "feasibility study" - from confidential reports by the NSW Police Department on the influence of gangster syndicates in the Japanese construction industry, to "A Paranoid View of Japan" written anonymously by a reputedly highly-placed civil servant, and various cautionary essays by academics familiar with Japanese culture, economics, commercial structures and social issues.

A *Couchman* Show at Port Adelaide on June 27 presented an audience of about 200 people, unanimously opposed to foreign ownership/control of Australia; angry that local pollution problems have been ignored by the same State Government which now declares Gilman's serious problems are "solvable"; and obviously fed up with Government-corporate deals providing privileges under the cloak of "commercial confidentiality" and Mr. Bannon's infamous Indenture Acts (which sidestep existing planning and environment regulations).

The impetus of present Government policy and adroit Public Relations makes it doubtful how much "public discussion" may affect the MFP development... but dissent is certain.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has declared it will:

- (a) Set up a "new broadly based group" representing Federal and State Governments, business, and education groups to "supervise the next phase of the project".
 - (b) Undertake that the project "will not go ahead unless the Governments are satisfied the MFP is economically sound and socially acceptable to Australians".
 - (c) Enter "widespread community consultation".
 - (d) Include "a greater international focus to ensure the project is truly international".
- Government Ministers have said it is important that "national economic opportunities, already identified during the Feasibility Study process are not lost".

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